



Recreation Element

“Park improvement is among the most important of the undertakings now before the city. It should have the cordial cooperation of all.”

*San Diego Union Editorial on the
City Park System, July 6, 1910*

Purpose

To preserve, acquire, develop, operate/maintain, increase and enhance public recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the city for all users.

Introduction

The city’s parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities play an important role in the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of the city and its residents. They provide many benefits and can improve the quality of life by strengthening the body and assisting in maintaining physical well-being; providing the visual relief and relaxation that refreshes and restores the frame of mind, creating opportunities for social interaction and provide alternatives to crime, and also improve air quality, reduce urban runoff, and decrease the effects of urban heat islands.

The Recreation Element contains policies which are intended to result in increased and enhanced public recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the city. The element provides greater definition to many of the broad policy initiatives addressing flexibility in providing park and recreation facilities that were originally set forth in the 1979 General Plan. The following summarizes the major challenges of providing quality park and recreation facilities and services for all users in today’s urbanized environment.

- ◆ As resident and visitor population continues to grow, the demand on existing/remaining usable park and recreation resources/facilities will increase, especially in developed communities, as will the pressure to develop open space lands and resource-based parks for recreational purposes.
- ◆ The foundation of a successful and sustainable park and recreation system for the city centers around the creation and implementation of a comprehensive Parks Master Plan (PMP) which will inventory all city recreational uses and facilities, set priorities and develop implementation strategies to meet community needs.
- ◆ There still remains an inequitable distribution of and access to park citywide, especially in older, developed communities; in developed communities, park and other community uses must be balanced, and the unique difference among communities recognized, in order to achieve livable neighborhoods and communities.



- ◆ Long-term coordination and partnerships with schools, other public agencies or private entities must be optimized to provide needed recreational opportunities where land is limited or not available.
- ◆ Greater flexibility in methods to provide park and recreation lands must be provided to reflect today's urbanized conditions, especially in developed communities where land is limited or not available.
- ◆ Appropriate park fees must be collected to meet population-based park needs generated by new development

The City's Parks and Open Space System

The city of San Diego provides three use categories of parks and recreation for residents and visitors: population-based, resource-based and open space. These three categories of recreation, including land, facilities and programming, constitute the city of San Diego's municipal park and recreation system.

- Population-based parks (commonly known as Neighborhood and Community parks), facilities and services are located in close proximity to residential development and are intended to serve the daily needs of the neighborhood and community. When possible, they adjoin schools in order to share facilities, and ideally are within walking distance of the residences within their service area.
- Resource-based parks are located at, or centered on, notable natural or man-made features (beaches, canyons, habitat systems, lakes, historic sites, and cultural facilities) and are intended to serve the citywide population as well as visitors.
- Natural open space lands are city-owned land located throughout the city consisting of canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms. This open space is intended to preserve and protect native plants and animals, while providing public access and enjoyment by the use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

City of San Diego definitions for 'park' and 'open space' vary according to the context in which the terms are used (see Table RE-1, Types of Parks and Open Space in the city of San Diego). For purposes of this document, General Plan-designated open space and parks are those areas of the city that are identified in adopted land use plans as open space or parks. As such, these areas include population and resource-based parks, open space with natural or cultural value (including Multiple Habitat Planning Area [MHPA] lands), and areas identified in land use plans that may not contain natural or cultural characteristics, but instead function to provide a land use buffer, visual relief, or similar purpose. Figure RE-1 (Add in Major Open Space Area to Map), General Plan-Designated Open Space/Parks Map identifies open space and parks in this context.



San Diego's environment, its coastal location, temperate climate, and diverse topography, contribute to the city's recreation capabilities. The goals and policies of the Recreation Element have been developed to take advantage of the city's natural environment, to build upon existing recreation facilities and services, and to adapt to future recreation needs. To accomplish this, the Recreation Element identifies goals and policies to address: 1) a diversity of recreation opportunities; 2) preservation of existing park and land facilities; 3) accessibility of facilities and services; 4) cooperative partnerships to attain parkland and facilities; 5) provision of open space and resource-based parks; and, 6) park and recreation guidelines.

The Recreation Element is not an isolated component of the General Plan. It is interconnected, in varying degrees to other elements of the General Plan. The Conservation Element provides additional policies for protecting and preserving our recreational natural resources and open space. The Urban Design Element recognizes the opportunities that park and recreation facilities provide toward creation of safe and walkable communities, distinctive neighborhoods, and significant public spaces and civic architecture. The Mobility Element recognizes that pedestrian and bicycle facilities help achieve both transportation and recreation goals. Overall, the City of Villages strategy reinforces the importance of recreation as a quality of life factor that needs to be integrated into communities.

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Table RE-1
Types of Park and Open Space in the City of San Diego

Type of Policy Document/Process	Type of Park/Open Space	Definition/Description	Attributes/Examples
General Plan & Community Land Use Plans	General Plan/Community Plan Designated Parks and Open Space	Land identified in adopted land use plan for use as either population or resource-based parks or open space.	Publicly or privately-owned Satisfies park and open space objectives of a land use plan May be modified by City Council through a land use plan amendment Includes Multi-Habitat Preservation Area (MHPA) lands May also include resources to protect public good (e.g., aesthetics, flood plains, historic) *EXAMPLES: Designated “Open Space” and “Park” lands that are controlled or held by private owners, quasi-public agencies or various city departments. City Water Department reservoir lands (e.g., MSCP Cornerstone Lands), MWWWD lands around facilities, Del Mar Mesa Community Plan Open Space, etc. (ADD OTHERS/P&R Review).
Council Policy	City Council Designated Parkland and Open Space	Land set aside by city resolution for park and recreation purposes (including open space).	Publicly-owned and managed by Park & Recreation Dept. May be used for any public purpose deemed necessary by the City Council Includes population-based and other types of parks and open space uses Reviewed periodically for consideration as dedicated parkland May be designated through subdivision process *EXAMPLES: Mission Trails Regional Park and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve (portions not formally dedicated yet), Rose Canyon, Marion Bear Park, La Jolla Shores Park/Cove, Rancho Encantada Open Space (a.k.a. Mission Trails North), etc. (ADD OTHERS/P&R Review).
	City Council Dedicated Parkland	Land dedicated by city ordinance or State legislature for park and recreation purposes only (including open space).	Publicly owned and managed by Park & Recreation Dept. Limited to park, recreation, and cemetery use May include population-based and other types of parks and open space uses Two-thirds voter approval required to remove dedication Proposed dedications require recommendation by Park and Recreation Board prior to City Council action *EXAMPLES: Mission Trails Regional Park and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve (portions formally dedicated), Mt. Hope Cemetery, Tecolote Canyon Park, Mission Bay, San Diego Zoo (ADD OTHERS/P&R Review).
Development Review Process/Exactions	Other Development Restricted Parkland/Open Space	Land encumbered by open space easement in favor of the city, or identified in the subdivision process as a park or an open space lot.	Not publicly owned Future development controlled by restrictions placed on property by the city City Council action required to remove restrictions May also have an open space designation in community plan Subdivision/project mitigation for habitat/species impacts (private owner retains ownership)*EXAMPLES: Rancho Encantada Open Space (a.k.a. Mission Trails North), Montana Mirador, Pacific Highlands Ranch



			Open Space/Wildlife Crossing, Torrey Surf (ADD OTHERS/P&R Review).
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Insert MAP – Figure RE-1- General Plan Designated Open Space and Parks Map



A. Public Access and Recreational Opportunities

Goals

- ◆ Provide a diverse range of active and passive recreation opportunities that achieves the needs and desires of each neighborhood/community which reinforces and//respects the city's natural beauty and resources.
- ◆ Provide a park and recreation facilities that are designed to accommodate the needs of a diverse population.
- ◆ Provide a park and open space system that is integrated into and accessible to the community and adds to the citywide inter-connected Open Space/Park system.
- ◆ Effectively manage our regional and urban parks and open space system, including our bays, zoos, beaches, rivers, which gives our region identity, attracts tourism and enriches the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Discussion

San Diego's mild climate, diverse topography, and unique location physically define the city and enhance its recreational opportunities. San Diego is fortunate to have a temperate climate that makes comfortable year-round outdoor recreation possible. The hillsides, canyons, mesas, and floodplains that define the city's topography provide numerous and varied recreational opportunities. The city's coastal location, its beaches, bays, and estuaries, provide a combination of active and passive recreation. San Diego is also defined by its diverse neighborhoods and communities. These neighborhoods and communities are reflective of the wide array of cultures, income levels, ethnicities, and household types that represent the city and influence its recreation choices.

Recreation and leisure-time activities are defined by the user, and include active and passive pursuits. While some residents and visitors may participate in active recreation such as organized or programmed sports, others may choose passive activities such as reading under a shade tree, strolling through a garden, or observing nature. Individual recreation choices are based on a number of factors including location, age, family composition, schedule, physical ability, and culture.

The city's park and recreation system offers a broad range of recreation opportunities. It is a network of park lands, open space, recreation facilities, programs, and staff services designed to meet the specialized needs of individual neighborhoods and communities. The city provides numerous opportunities for recreation and leisurely pursuits throughout the city including sports fields and organized team sports, swimming pools, tennis courts, parks, beaches, picnic areas, skate parks, dog-off-leash parks, programs for youths and adults, hiking/biking and equestrian trials, and areas of scenic and visual enjoyment.



Policies

- RE-A.1. Provide a diversity of recreation facilities and programs to meet the demographically changing needs of the community.
- RE-A.2. Sustain partnerships with neighborhoods in the planning, site selection, design, and construction of park and recreation facilities to ensure neighborhood and community needs are satisfied.
- RE-A.3. Include community recreation needs in community plans to ensure recreation facilities and programs reflect community needs and desires.
- RE-A.4. Allow certain portions of resource-based parks and open space lands to fulfill population-based park needs when facilities are typical to neighborhood and community parks. See Policy RE-F.14 for additional guidance.

B. Preservation

Goals

- ◆ Preserve, protect and enhance the integrity and quality of existing parks, open space, and recreation programs citywide.
- ◆ Preserve, protect and enrich natural, cultural, and historic resources that serve as recreation facilities

Discussion

San Diegans place a high value on the availability of park and recreation opportunities, and increasingly recognize their importance as a requisite companion to urban living as population densities increase. As San Diego continues to grow, so will its demand for additional housing. Since undeveloped residential land in the city is diminishing, much of the housing planned for the future will be in the form of infill development and redevelopment. This will be especially evident in the older, well established urban communities. Preservation and enhancement of existing population-based parks, recreation programs, and open space is essential and will require careful balancing of community and park infrastructure needs.

Key to the preservation and enhancement of open space and parkland are the city's resource-based parks which are home to many of the city's cultural and natural resources. Cultural resources are man-made physical features associated with human activity. In addition to their



historic value, cultural resources often function as recreation facilities. The Old Mission Dam (Padre Dam) in Mission Trails Regional Park and the Presidio and Fort Stockton in Presidio Park are examples of cultural resources that provide recreational value. Natural resources are the naturally occurring environmental attributes of the region. They include the beaches, canyons, mesas, rivers, floodplains, and associated plants and animals. These resources, like cultural resources, provide varying opportunities for recreation. Cultural and natural resources should be protected and preserved as reminders of man's historic presence, the regions' natural history, and to provide maximum educational, recreational, and aesthetic benefit for the citizens of, and visitors to San Diego.

Mission Trails Regional Park has been called the third jewel in the City of San Diego Park System (Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park are the first and second.) Started in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. Originally inhabited by the Kumeyaay Indians, it is the site of the Old Mission Dam, built to store water for the Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The park encompasses approximately 8,000 acres of rugged hills, valleys, and open areas which represent a San Diego prior to the landing of Explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in San Diego Bay in 1542.

Mission Trails Regional Park provides San Diego residents and visitors a way to explore the cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational aspects of San Diego. The park is operated and maintained by the city of San Diego in close partnership with the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. With more than 40 miles of trails, boating on Lake Murray, camping at Kumeyaay Lake, numerous informative hikes, and a state-of-the-art Visitor & Interpretive Center, Mission Trails Regional Park has something to offer everyone.

Policies

- RE-B.1. Protect existing parklands and open space from unauthorized encroachment by adjacent development through appropriate enforcement measures.
- RE-B.2. Acquire land abutting existing parks and open space lands to protect the integrity of the park, open space or resource, where appropriate.
- RE-B.3. Protect, manage and enhance resource-based parks and open space lands through appropriate means which include sensitive planning, park and open space dedications and physical protective devices.
- RE-B.4. Identify and secure funding sources necessary for protecting and preserving resource-based parks and open space.
- RE-B.5. Preserve all beaches for public-only purposes, including the protection of sensitive habitat and species.



- RE-B.6. Design parks to preserve, enhance, and incorporate items of natural, cultural, or historic importance.
- RE-B.7. Protect parks from over-commercialization and privatization.
- RE-B.8. Protect beaches and canyons from uncontrolled urban run off.
- RE-B.9. Develop programs to educate the public on the variety, importance, and recreational uses of the city's natural and cultural resources.
- RE-B.10. Determine strategies that accommodate both land for residential, commercial, and industrial use with the needs for land for parks and open space use.
- RE-B.11. Allow partial population-based parks credit to be accepted for the provision of private recreation venues when it is clearly identified that the facility and programs are for public use and are intended to help maintain and expand recreation programs, and are bound by agreements that are in effect in perpetuity.

C. Accessibility

Goals

- ◆ Provide park and recreation facilities that are designed to accommodate the needs of a diverse population.
- ◆ Provide park and recreation facilities that promote safe and timely access by foot, bicycle, public transit, automobile, and alternative modes of travel.
- ◆ Provide an inter-connected park and open space system that is integrated into and accessible to the community.

Discussion

Park and recreation facilities enhance the quality of life for all San Diegans. The Strategic Framework Element recommends that park and recreation facilities be integrated into the urban fabric so they become a convenient and easily accessible part of the daily life of San Diegans. San Diego's recreation system is comprised of a large number of facility types and programs dispersed throughout the city.



Recreation access has three main components: linkage, opportunity, and availability. Regarding recreation linkages, ideally, all facilities should be located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods and employment centers. However, given the wide variety of recreation facility types, their use characteristics, and associated costs, it is not feasible to locate every type of recreation facility in every community. Therefore, regional amenity facilities should be placed equitably throughout the city. The Mobility Element provides additional recommendations regarding access including policies for development of a citywide trails master plan, a citywide pedestrian master plan, and an expanded transit network.

Recreation opportunity addresses the need for facilities to be accessible to the broadest population possible. This means facilities should be optimally located and designed to address people with special needs. They should be located along transit routes that provide access for the disabled, elderly, teens, and the economically disadvantaged. They should be designed as open facilities that can be easily navigated by seniors and persons with disabilities. Outdoor recreational opportunities should also be available to the diverse population within the city's open space and resource-based parks. This can be accomplished through development of accessible overlooks and trails, where feasible, and interpretive and directional signs.

Recreation availability addresses the need for facilities to be open for use by the general public. Many recreation facilities set aside time for exclusive use by programmed activities, such as sport leagues, clubs, or other private groups. These programmed activities fulfill recreational needs of the community. However, a balance between programmed and non-programmed use of recreation facilities must be achieved to make facilities available to the greatest variety of users.

Policies

- RE-C.1. Provide new and upgraded park and recreation facilities that employ barrier-free design principles that make them accessible to all San Diegans regardless of age or physical ability.
- RE-C.2. Provide barrier free trails and outdoor experiences and opportunities for persons with disabilities where feasible.
- RE-C.3. Provide recreation programs and services specifically designed to meet the needs of children, the increasing elderly population, and the underserved teenage population.
- RE-C.4. Equitably distribute specialized/amenity-based recreation facilities that are not feasibly located in most community parks based on broader service areas.
- RE-C.5. Improve public transit to park and recreation facilities.
 - a. Consider the location of existing and proposed recreation facilities in developing transit routes.



- b. Provide safe and convenient transit access to all parks and amenity-based recreation facilities.
- RE-C.6. Provide safe and convenient linkages to and within park and recreation facilities and open space areas.
 - a. Provide pedestrian and bicycle paths between recreation facilities and residential development.
 - b. Designate pedestrian and bicycle corridors, and where appropriate, equestrian corridors, that link residential neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities, trails, and open space.
 - c. Improve public access through development of, and improvements to, multi-use trails within urban canyons and other open space areas.
 - d. Coordinate efforts with the city's Pedestrian Master Plan and Trails Master Plan to provide safe and convenient linkages between areas (see Mobility, Section A, Walkable Communities).
- RE-C.7. Provide public access to open space for recreational purposes.
 - a. Provide public access into Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) open space for only those recreational purposes deemed compatible with the preservation goals of the MSCP Subarea Plan.
 - b. Provide public access at locations consistent with the goals and policies of the Conservation Element.
 - c. Provide new, and preserve, and enhance existing public beach access.
 - d. Where credit has been given for private recreational facilities that help satisfy community needs, it must be accessible, reasonably open and available to the public, and in effect in perpetuity (see also RE-B.11).
- RE-C.8. Balance the scheduling of programmed and non-programmed use of recreation facilities to provide access to a diversity of users.

D. Joint Use and Cooperative Partnerships

Goals

- ◆ Promote efficient use of land and facilities through sharing of public and private resources for active and passive recreation.
- ◆ Coordinate interagency public lands, facilities and infrastructure use for recreational activities and programs.
- ◆ Develop joint use and lease agreements that contribute to the recreational and physical education needs of the community.



Discussion

Creative methods for cost-effective and efficient use of public lands are required if recreation facilities are to be improved, enhanced, and expanded to meet existing and future needs. San Diego's expanding urban development and its desire to protect and preserve parkland, recreation facilities, and open space have limited the availability of, and placed constraints on, developable lands. One creative means of providing additional lands and facilities for public recreation use is through joint use of public and non-profit facilities such as parks, swimming pools, and schools. Joint use facilities can include any land area or physical structure shared by one or more public or non-profit entities. An example of a joint use facility is a multi-purpose sportsfield at a secondary, or middle, school that is exclusively used for school purposes during school hours, but is available for public use when school is not in session. Joint use serves an increasingly important role in providing recreation facilities in the older, more densely populated urban communities.

San Diego has a well-established history of developing successful joint use recreation facilities. The city of San Diego entered into its first joint use agreement in September 1948 with the San Diego Unified School District. The city is now a party to approximately 100 similar agreements between it and the San Diego Unified, Solana Beach, Del Mar Union, Poway Unified, and San Ysidro School Districts. These agreements have accommodated the need for recreation space by designating school sites for off-hour recreation use. The agreements have resulted in space for multi-purpose courts, turf playfields, lighted and unlighted multi-purpose sportsfields, children's play areas and parking lots in communities throughout the city.

In addition to the continued pursuit of joint use opportunities with school districts, there are opportunities for new cooperative partnerships with governmental agencies and other entities with land holdings. Underutilized public facilities, such as surplus land, remnant parcels, rights-of-way, paper streets, structures, rooftops and underground facilities can provide recreation opportunities. Rights-of-way provide opportunities for trails that link recreation facilities. Unnecessary paper streets could be vacated and acquired for mini-park development. Surplus land and remnant parcels could be developed into population and resource based recreation facilities. Underutilized structures could provide space for recreation programs, underground facilities could possibly provide recreation space at ground level, and rooftops could potentially provide additional recreational opportunities. Once identified and developed, such cooperative partnerships could provide needed recreation facilities and services.

The City Heights Urban Village is an outstanding example of joint use and cooperative partnerships between public and private organizations. The project is the result of a partnership between the City of San Diego, San Diego Unified School District, the San Diego Foundation, CityLink Investment Corp., Price Charities, and the San Diego Housing Commission. The City Heights Urban Village resulted from a redevelopment project that recreated the core of the City Heights community by establishing a pedestrian-friendly town square that includes important



public facilities. The village includes the City Heights Weingart Branch Library, Rosa Parks Elementary School, the City Heights Recreation Center, playing fields, public tennis complex and swimming pool, municipal gymnasium, performance area, police substation, and an adult learning center. Also within the village are offices, a retail center, and 116 townhomes. The urban village covers 10 city blocks within the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area.

Policies

- RE-D.1. Engage in multi-purpose planning to provide a variety of compatible recreational activities within a given location.
- RE-D.2. Work with local school districts, colleges, and universities to expand development of on-campus joint-use recreation facilities including multi-purpose courts, parking lots, and multi-purpose athletic fields.
- RE-D.3. Support local school districts' efforts to expand elementary and secondary school sites that result in additional joint-use opportunities while balancing the competing needs of recreation and housing.
- RE-D.4. Strive for mutually agreeable long-term, joint-use agreements with other public agencies to assure recreation for future generations.
- RE-D.5. Pursue acquisition or lease of surplus school property for park development.
- RE-D.6. Establish a policy to address use of underutilized or unnecessary city rights-of-way.
 - a. Development and maintain an inventory of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way, including underlying ownership.
 - b. Develop criteria to determine potential value of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way for bike, pedestrian, and equestrian linkages for trail access to open space canyons, and as overlooks into open space or beaches.
- RE-D.7. Design public facilities to incorporate recreational elements, such as children's play areas, rooftop parks, courts and arenas, plazas, and mini-parks.
- RE-D.8. Promote and support the inclusion of public park and recreation facilities into private developments, such as children's play areas, rooftop parks, arena and courts, pocket parks and usable public plazas, which may satisfy population-based park and recreation facility standards according to adopted policies.
- RE-D.9. Pursue partnerships with public agencies and non-profit entities to provide additional recreational space within the city such as parks, greenbelts, trail connections,



parkways, bike paths, and other recreation facilities. Potential partners for recreation land and facilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Metropolitan Transit Service
- San Diego Unified Port District
- California Department of Transportation
- U. S. Department of Defense
- Other governmental agencies and jurisdictions
- Utility and railroad companies
- Redevelopment agencies
- Non-profit youth and recreation entities

RE-D.10. Explore acquisition or utilization of government-owned surplus or remnant parcels for public park use.

RE-D.11. Negotiate and enter into joint use agreements with school districts to help implement population-based park recommendations (see also Table RE-3).

- a. Provide one acre credit to a subdivider for each usable acre, up to five acres, when an elementary school provides for on-campus, neighborhood-serving recreational facilities for joint use purposes.
- b. Provide one acre credit to a subdivider for each usable acre, up to seven acres, when a secondary/middle school provides for on-campus, community-serving recreational facilities for joint use purposes.
- c. Placeholder for additional language on join use agreement safeguards.

E. Open Space Lands and Resource-Based Parks

Goals

- ◆ Provide an open space and resource-based park system that provides for the preservation and management of natural resources, enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities, and protection of the public health and safety.
- ◆ Minimize alterations to the open space lands and resource-based parks by preserving and integrating the natural terrain and drainage systems of San Diego into the urban form as a central design element.
- ◆ Provide a system of pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian paths linking communities, neighborhoods, parks, and the open space system.



Discussion

Open space may be defined as land or water areas generally free from development or developed with very low intensity uses that respect the characteristics of the natural environment. Open space is generally non-urban in character and may have utility for: park and recreation purposes; conservation of land, water, or other natural resources; historic or scenic purposes; or support of the mission of military installations as detailed in §65560 of the California Government Code. Open space that may be designated for outdoor recreation includes, but is not limited to: areas of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to passive recreation space adjacent to waterfronts, rivers and creeks; urban canyons; specified areas within the city's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP); and areas that serve as links between major recreation uses and open space, such as utility easements, river banks, and trails. The Conservation Element further defines and expands on policies for preservation of open space.

As stated in the introduction of the Recreation Element, the city of San Diego definitions for 'open space' and 'park' vary according to the context in which the terms are used. Table RE-1, Park and Open Space Terminology, identifies the three contexts in which open space and parks are used, defines them in that context, and lists the general attributes for each. For purposes of this document, designated parks and open space lands are those areas of the city that are identified in adopted land use plans and referred to as either general plan parks or general plan open space lands.

Resource-based parks are sometimes located within open space, as previously defined. They are intended to preserve and make available to all residents and visitors those areas of outstanding scenic, natural, or cultural interest. Examples of resource-based parks are Mission Trails Regional Park, Mission Bay Park, and Balboa Park. Although resource-based parks are not developed to address the specific needs of any one community, portions of them can, and do function to fulfill the local neighborhood and community park needs of surrounding residents.

Mission Bay Park was developed from the 1940s through the 1960s using a tidal marsh that Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo named "False Bay" in 1542. In 1944, a Chamber of Commerce committee recommended development of Mission Bay into a tourist and recreation center to help diversify the city's economy. In the late 1940s, dredging and filling operations began converting the marsh into the jewel that is today, Mission Bay Park. Twenty-five million cubic yards of sand and silt were dredged to create the land forms of the park, which now is almost entirely man-made.

Mission Bay Park comprises 27 miles of shoreline. Swimmers, boating enthusiasts, and sun lovers are drawn to Mission Bay's beaches and water activities. The park offers a wide variety of recreation facilities and activities including boat docks and launching facilities, sailboat and motor rentals, 14 miles of biking and walking paths, basketball courts, and play areas for children. It's one of San Diego's most visited parks.



Policies

- RE-E.1. Protect and enhance resource-based parks through planning and acquisition.
- RE-E.2. Provide for sensitive development of recreation uses within and adjacent to city-owned open space lands.
- Include only those development features and amenities that do not encroach upon or harm the feature or resource that inspires the open space or resource-based park
 - Design and maintain open space lands to preserve or enhance topographic and other natural site characteristics.
 - Create or enhance open space multi-use trails pursuant to a citywide trails master plan to accommodate, where appropriate, pedestrians/hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
 - Locate canyon and other open space trails to take advantage of existing pathways and maintenance easements where possible and desirable.
 - Preserve designated public open space view corridors, such as views to the Pacific Ocean, other bodies of water, and significant topographic features.
 - Preserve open space along lakes, rivers, and creek beds for passive public recreation uses that are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.
 - Plant only native plant and non-invasive naturalized plant materials adjacent to open space lands.
 - Plant only native plant materials in open space lands intended for natural resource protection.
- RE-E.3. Acquire remaining private beaches within the city for public use.
- RE-E.4. Balance passive recreation needs of trail use with environmental preservation.
- RE-E.5. Utilize open space lands for outdoor recreation purposes, when doing so is compatible with MSCP preservation goals and surrounding land uses, including, but not limited to:
- Locations of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value.
 - Corridors that link recreation facilities and open space areas such as utility easements, river and streams banks, trails and scenic highway corridors
 - Sites particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, such as areas adjacent to and providing access to beaches, lakeshores, rivers, and streams.



F. Park and Recreation Guidelines

Goals

- ◆ Provide a sustainable park and recreation system that meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- ◆ Acquire and develop parklands to keep pace with population growth.
- ◆ Promote alternative methods of providing recreation facilities and infrastructure where development of typical facilities and infrastructure are limited by land constraints.

Discussion

As the city has grown, so have the quantity, quality, and distribution of recreation opportunities. New parks and open space have been acquired and facilities and services have been expanded in response to population-based needs. Recreation activities in the form of cultural, athletic, sport, social, and craft programs have been developed to serve a wide variety of the population throughout the city at parks, recreation centers, athletic fields, and public schools. Table RE-2, Existing Parks and Open Space Lands within the city of San Diego, provides a breakdown of the types and quantities of parks within the city.



Table RE-2
Existing Park and Open Space Lands Within the City of San Diego

District	Population*	Population-Based Parks		Resource-Based Parks (ac.)	Natural Open Space Lands(ac.)	Designated (ac.)	Dedicated (ac.)	Joint Use School Sites (ac.)		Other Park Lands (ac.)**	Other Public Agency Parks & Open Space (ac.)***	Total Parks and Open Space (ac.)
		Gross	Net usable					Gross	Net Usable			
Central	316,705	126.6	99.7	1,126.5	169.6	150.1	1,272.3	50.8	48.8		32.6	
Coastal	141,725	166.4	97.8	4,568.6	327.3	94.6	4,967.4	11.1	11.1		245.7	
Eastern	253,843	489.7	367.5	0.0	6,493.2	6,093.3	1,225.0	122.9	122.2		0.0	
North Central	208,099	393.7	255.9	481.5	715.4	250.4	492.9	50.9	50.1		1,327.6	
Northern	272,211	613.1	431.6	60.3	12,658.9	9,338.1	3,966.9	111.0	109.4		181.9	
Southern	99,449	216.9	134.3	1.1	1,142.1	1,215.8	143.2	5.0	5.0			
City Total	1,294,032	2006.4	1386.8	6,238	21,506.5	17,142.3	12,067.7	351.7	346.6			
Total acres per Thousand												

* SANDAG population estimate for 2004

** Includes cemeteries and stand alone facilities that are not within parks, such as swimming pools, recreation centers, and skate parks.

*** Includes the following:

Border Field State Park and Tijuana Estuary National Park - 2,531 ac

Heritage County Park – 7.8 ac.

San Pasqual Battle Field State Historic Park – 1.9 ac

Torrey Pines State Reserve – 1,446.2 ac.

Old Town State Park – 29.0 ac.

Tijuana River Regional Park -

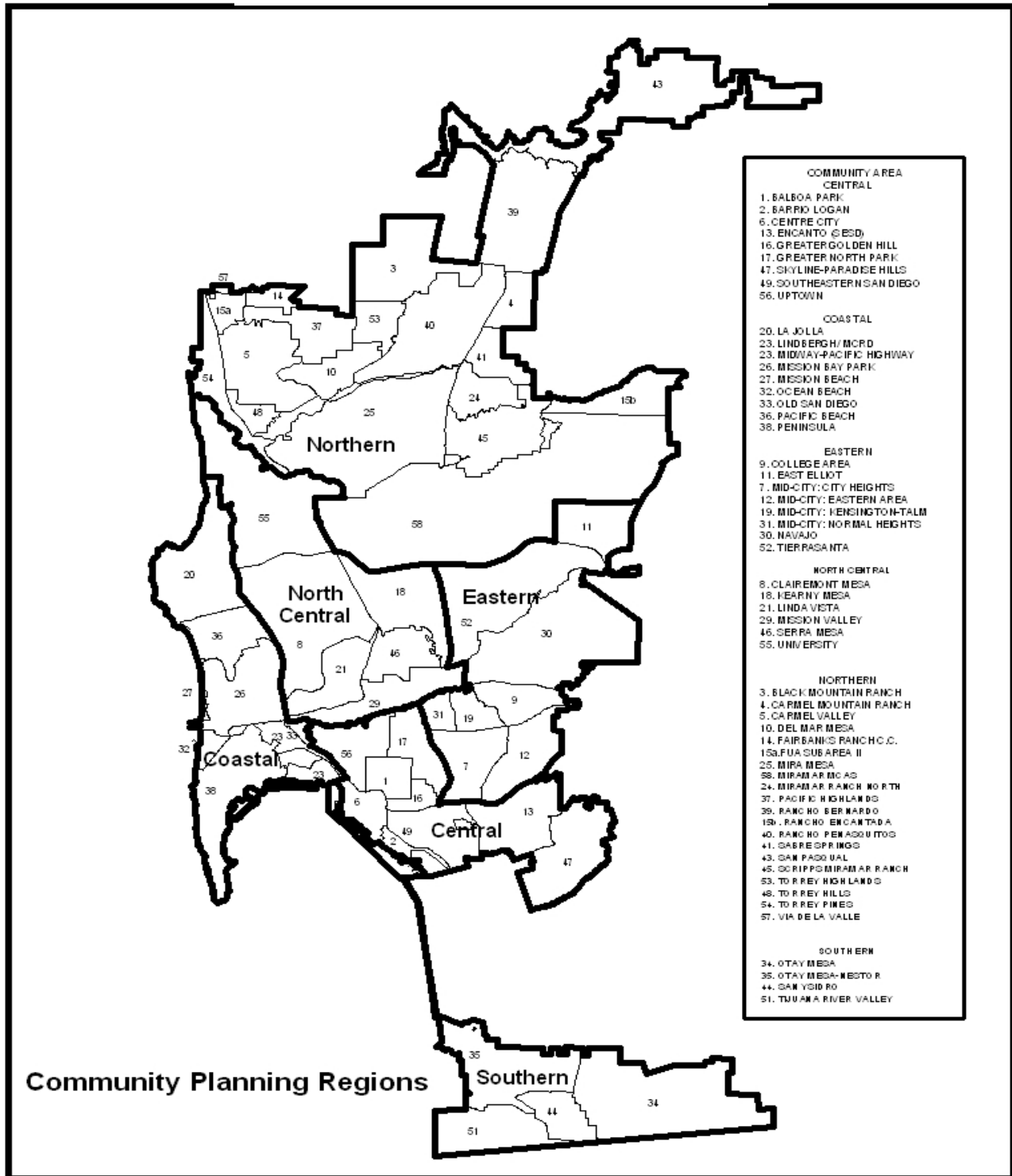
Cabrillo National Monument – 160 ac.

Port of San Diego – 81.5ac.

Torrey Pines State Beach – 61.36 ac.



Figure RE – 2 Community Planning Regions



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8/3/2005



Although improving, a variation continues to exist between communities with respect to facilities provided, total population-based park acres, and existing population-based park acres per 1,000 residents. Of most concern is the relative lack of neighborhood and community facilities in portions of older urbanized neighborhoods. Reasons for this are related to the age of the communities, uneven distribution of facilities, and the types of facilities included in the calculation of population-based parks per 1,000 residents. First, the older urbanized communities were developed without specified park development guidelines or park fees. Second, large resource-based parks such as Mission Bay Park and Balboa Park, which serve the needs of the entire city and visitors, but also serve the neighborhood and community park needs of nearby residents have not been given credit towards meeting population-based park acreage recommendations. Compounding this dilemma is the current trend to “infill” the older urban areas of the city with more dense residential development, which add new residents to a given area, creating a greater demand for population-based park and recreation facilities than otherwise may have existed. Adding to the difficulty in developing new facilities in older urbanized communities is the lack of land readily available for development of parks. Retrofitting those neighborhoods with new parks must be achieved with solutions that balance the often competing needs of parks and housing. The Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element provides additional goals and policies related to provision of recreation facilities.

There are many recreation facilities within the city that, while not under the control of the city of San Diego, provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities for the public. These facilities come in many forms, from government-owned and operated parks to commercial endeavors, such as fitness clubs. Each serves to increase recreation opportunities, if only for a specified time. Of significant benefit to the public are those facilities that are owned, operated, and maintained by other governmental agencies and non-profit entities. These facilities tend to represent long term investments in recreation and are designed to be accessible to the widest breadth of the public. Examples of these are the Cabrillo National Monument, Torrey Pines State Park, the Salvation Army Corps Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, YMCAs, Jewish Community Centers and the numerous non-profit recreation facilities located throughout the city. While not owned and operated by the city, it should be recognized that these facilities do provide a valuable asset to residents and assist in meeting their recreation needs.

On May 26, 1868, when San Diego consisted of only 2,301 residents and 915 houses, a 1,400 acre tract of nine city pueblo lots was set aside as “City Park.” Twenty-four years later, in 1892, Kate O. Sessions asked city officials to lease 30 acres of “City Park” for a nursery, and in return, she would plant 100 trees per year throughout the park. In 1902, the Park Improvement Committee employed landscape architect Samuel Parsons, to develop a comprehensive plan for the park. By 1910 the parkland began to look much as it does today. In that same year a contest was held to rename the park. Balboa, in honor of Spanish explorer Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, was selected, in part, because the park also offered wide views of the Pacific Ocean.



Balboa Park owes much of its development to two world fairs, the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-16, and the California Pacific International Exposition of 1935-36. The design of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition reflected Spanish Colonial Architecture. The Cabrillo Bridge, most of the Cultural Center buildings along El Prado, and the Spreckels Organ Pavilion were built for the Exposition, under the supervision of architect, Bertrum Goodhue. The development of the Southern Palisades grew out of the California Pacific International Exposition and was designed to represent a complete history of the Southwest, from prehistoric times to the modern era under the direction of Richard Requa, Director of Architecture and Landscaping. Many of the buildings were designed to be reminders of Indian Pueblo or Mayan building design.

Today, Balboa Park is comprised of more than 1,100 acres. It includes fifteen museums, various gardens, arts and international culture associations, recreation areas, and the San Diego Zoo. This urban park at the edge of downtown is renowned for its brilliant displays of seasonal flowers, shady groves of trees, and meandering paths through rolling lawns. It offers something historical, horticultural, educational, and recreational for everyone. Approximately 14 million visitors come to the park each year.

An ideal balance of recreational opportunities throughout the city is best achieved by considering a number of factors, such as numerical criteria for park acres and facilities, economic feasibility, community needs and desires, topographic conditions, changing demographics, and evolving trends in recreation. Park acreage, physical facilities, accessibility and distance, supervision and leadership should all be included in the total effort to achieve as much as possible the same degree of service of opportunity or need fulfillment in each community citywide. Neighborhood and community facilities should take a variety of forms in response to the specific needs and desires of the residents involved. Neighborhood parks should be oriented toward achieving maximum neighborhood involvement in terms of interest, participation, and support. They should be an important element in creating neighborhood identity.

Community facilities should supplement those in the neighborhood parks and provide for a greater variety of facilities and active programmed uses. Table RE-3, Park and Recreation Guidelines, provides the standards and strategies for development of population-based recreation facilities. The purpose is two-fold: First is to provide a means of measuring the degree to which park and recreation facilities are developed; and second, to equitably provide facilities throughout the city. The guidelines should be used with discretion and are basic tools for guiding and evaluating the adequacy of service to a given area and to the city as a whole. Their application should allow for flexibility as opportunities arise or the needs and desires of the residents change.

Constraints related to land availability, potential loss of housing, or funding may make implementation of the Park and Recreation Guidelines infeasible in portions of some communities. Additionally, strict compliance with the guidelines can limit the flexibility needed



to meet community-specific needs and demands. Alternative methods of providing recreation facilities need to be available to achieve citywide equity where constraints may make meeting guidelines infeasible, or to satisfy community specific needs and demands where flexibility is required. The equivalencies identified in Table RE-3, while not all inclusive, provide additional means for achieving equity by increasing recreation opportunities, improving access or utilization, or providing additional or non-traditional recreation facilities.

In addition to land constraints, the city has been continually challenged with economic constraints in regards to park development, maintenance and operations. Although funding sources for capital improvements are limited in some areas of the city, funding for park and facilities maintenance and operations is harder to come by and is usually the first item to be cut from the annual budget. Therefore, it is essential that new parks and recreation facilities and park improvements to existing parks and facilities be designed and constructed to be sustainable: to endure the intended use with minimal funding for maintenance or upgrades during the expected useful life of the facility. This would include the application of water and energy conservation measures, green building technology, low maintenance plantings, and design which is sensitive to local environmental conditions.



Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Equivalencies

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components or Requirements	Equivalencies*	
				Alternatives	Enhancements
Population-Based**	Neighborhood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 acres or an acre per acre credit up to 5 acres for joint use adjacent to an elementary school (see policies in section RE-D) • Serves a population of 5,000 residents within ½ mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and design based on population and use characteristics • Elements may include: play and picnic areas, children's play areas, multi-purpose courts, multi-purpose lawn areas, comfort stations, and landscaping • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies • Requires written confirmation of joint use with school district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini parks • Joint-use areas • Portions of resource-based parks or open space with typical neighborhood-serving park components and facilities • Facilities not normally associated with a neighborhood park but provide additional neighborhood recreational opportunities, such as a rooftop recreation area or basketball and tennis courts in non-traditional locations • Building additions or expansions <p>Alternatives must be located within the guidelines service radius</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor recreational space improvements • Artificial turf that extends use and minimizes downtime for maintenance • Public plazas and landscaped areas with typical recreational and park like amenities, such as seating and picnic facilities



Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Equivalencies

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components or Requirements	Equivalencies*	
				Alternatives	Enhancements
Population-Based**	Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 acres or an acre per acre credit up to 7 acres for joint use adjacent to a secondary / middle school (see policies in section RE-D) • Serves a population of 25,000 residents within 1½ mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities to supplement neighborhood parks • Based on needs, preferences, and use characteristics of community • Elements may include: multi-purpose sports fields, multi-purpose courts, recreation center, children's play areas, picnic areas, comfort stations, lawn, dog-off-leash areas, skate park, swimming pool, and landscaping • Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies • Requires written confirmation of joint use with school district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint-use areas serving single or multiple communities • Additions or expansions to community parks facilities may include a new or expanded recreation center, swimming pool, or sports courts • Portions of resource-based parks or open space with typical community-serving park components and facilities • May include citywide, amenity-based facilities such as skate parks and skating rinks, dog off-leash areas, and sports complexes located throughout the city and serving regional or multi-community population-based needs • Facilities not normally associated with a community park but provide additional community recreational opportunities, such as a rooftop soccer/roller arena or rooftop tennis complex • Alternatives must be located within the guidelines service radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor recreational space and specialty-use room improvements • Artificial turf that extends use and minimizes downtime for maintenance • Upgrades to children's play areas



Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Equivalencies

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components or Requirements	Equivalencies*	
				Alternatives	Enhancements
Population-Based**	Swimming Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves a population of 50,000 residents within 1½ to 2 mile radius** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be stand-alone facility or located within a community park <p>Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additions or expansions to existing aquatic facility, such as a secondary pool, water play element, bathroom and locker rooms, and other associated facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements, restorations or upgrades to aquatics building Conversion of existing facilities to upgraded or specialty use (therapeutic or disabled accessible pools)
Population-Based***	Recreation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves a population of 25,000 residents within 1½ mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be stand-alone facility or located within a community park Elements may include gymnasiums, indoor courts, multi-purpose rooms and other community serving facilities Comply with applicable Park and Recreation standards and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additions or expansions to existing recreation center, such as a gymnasium, a stage or performance space, multi-purpose rooms, indoor sports courts, craft rooms, and other associated facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing recreational space and specialty-use room restorations or improvements Conversion of existing facilities to upgraded or specialty use (weight/fitness rooms, dance rooms)



Table RE-3
Park and Recreation Guidelines and Equivalencies

Category	Recreation Facility or Type	Guidelines	Typical Components or Requirements	Equivalencies*	
				Alternatives	Enhancements
Resource-Based	-----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 15 and 17 acres per 1,000 residents citywide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located at site of distinctive scenic, natural, historical or cultural feature Intended for citywide use Developed amenities should not impair distinctive feature or resource Includes parks, such as beaches and shorelines, Balboa Park, Mission Bay Park 	-----	-----
Open Space	-----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 1.1 and 2 acres per 1,000 residents citywide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-owned land located throughout the city consisting of canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms. 	-----	-----

* The enhancements identified are representative, and not exclusive.

** Population calculations determined using projected dwelling units by community and projected persons per household by community..



Table RE-4
Acreage Calculation for Population-Based Parks

Cumulative Population	Acres*	Neighborhood Parks (NP)	Community Parks (CP)	Net Usable Acres/1,000 Residents
5,000	10	1	---	$\begin{array}{r} \text{NP- } 50 \text{ ac}/25,000 = 2.0 \\ \text{CP- } 20 \text{ ac}/25,000 = \underline{0.8} \\ 2.8 \end{array}$
10,000	10	1	---	
15,000	10	1	---	
20,000	10	1	---	
25,000	30	1	1	2.8 net usable acres/1,000 Residents
25,000 pop.	70 acres	5	1	

Policies

- RE-F.1. Use community plan updates to further refine citywide park and recreation policies.
- Identify community-specific recreation needs and desires.
 - Identify opportunities for recreation equivalencies in communities where compliance with Park and Recreation Guidelines are not feasible or where specific community needs are not satisfied.
 - Use Public Facilities Financing Plans to properly fund park and recreation facilities.
- RE-F.2. Develop a citywide Parks Master Plan.
- Develop implementation strategies to meet urban park and recreational needs and ensure equitable access to recreational resources.
 - Include a conditions/needs assessment.
 - Include policies that further refine the intent of the Recreation Element.
 - Develop criteria for the use of equivalencies. See also RE-F.13.
 - Include measurements of recreation performance based on the Park and Recreation Guidelines and equivalencies.
 - Promote the preservation and management of the city's canyons as a part of the Park Master Plan. Acknowledge the many environmental and recreational benefits they provide.
- RE-F.3. Provide population-based parks at a minimum ratio of 2.8 net usable acres per 1,000 residents, or a combination of usable acreage and equivalencies.



- RE-F.4 Ensure adequate funding in financing plans for the acquisition of sufficient land necessary to achieve a minimum ratio of 2.8 net usable acres per 1,000 residents or appropriate equivalencies, including any unmet existing/future needs.
- RE-F.5 Adopt an ordinance which authorizes implementation of the state Subdivision Map Act/Quimby Act and provides a methodology for collecting land and/or appropriate park fees from new subdivisions for acquisition and development costs of population-based park and recreation facilities to serve future residents.
- RE-F.6 Designate as a priority, recreational funding resources for public recreation facilities in underserved neighborhoods.
- RE-F.7 Designate as a priority in underserved neighborhoods, scheduling of neighborhood parks and facilities for local youth activities.
- RE-F.8 Improve distribution of the most specialized recreation facilities, such as water play areas, pools, dog off-leash areas, and skate parks.
- RE-F.9 Ensure that appropriate quality and quantity of parks, recreation facilities and infrastructure is provided citywide, and that they can be sustained through typical city maintenance and operations budgets.
- RE-F.10 Develop a diverse range of recreation programs that are sensitive to community needs, interests, and financial resources.
- RE-F.11 Take advantage of recreational opportunities presented by the natural environment, in particular beach/ocean access and open space.
- RE-F.12 Pursue opportunities to develop mini-parks and vest pocket parks
 - a. Identify underutilized city lands with potential for use as mini parks, pocket parks and community gardens.
 - b. Encourage community participation in development and maintenance of city-owned mini parks and community gardens.
 - c. Pursue acquisition of lands, as they become available, that may be developed as mini parks.
 - d. Consider mini-parks as fulfilling population-based park acreage requirements if they met the criteria for equivalencies.
- RE-F.13 Utilize Park and Recreation “*Equivalencies*,” including but not limited to, those identified in Table RE-3, as a means of providing quality park and recreation facilities and infrastructure where development of useable acres for active recreational



purposes are limited by land constraints. The two categories of *Equivalencies* are *Alternatives* and *Enhancements* as follows:

Alternatives provide additional park land acreage or recreation facility space (square footage).

Enhancements are physical improvements to park land that is currently owned or controlled by the city. They do not provide additional acreage or recreation facility space (square footage).

- a. Use the proposed Parks Master Plan (see RE-F.2) to develop the criteria and details of how the allowances/calculations for *equivalencies* would be implemented and tracked on a project and community basis.
 1. As an interim measure, evaluate proposals for equivalencies using criteria included in Appendix ____.
 2. Limit use of equivalencies to a maximum of 50 percent of the required park lands.
- b. Clearly demonstrate through findings made and approved by the Park and Recreation Department the acceptability of any proposed “equivalencies” to required recreation facilities and infrastructure.
- c. Provide increased and expanded recreational facilities and programs by encouraging the identification of creative equivalency opportunities.
- d. Identify neighborhood and community preferences for equivalencies through a public input process.

RE-F.14. Identify, quantify, and consider as fulfilling population-based park needs, for purposes of General Plan and community plan park allocation, those portions of resource-based parks that satisfy neighborhood park and community park guidelines.

- a. Develop criteria for City Council adoption to determine the appropriate portions of resource-based parks which meet population-based neighborhood and community park needs.
 1. When allowing development of a resource-based parks for population-based needed, land purchase will no longer be needed; however, improvements and upgrades for its expanded use must be financed.
 2. Require City Council approval of specific proposals to use portions of resource-based parks to satisfy neighborhood park and community park.
- b. Document acreage and amenities within resource-based parks which meet neighborhood and community park needs in the population-based park inventory database to ensure correct accounting of among communities.

RE-F.15. Consider existing, long-term recreation facilities provided by non-profit organizations when establishing priorities for new facilities.



- RE-F.16. Establish a council policy or other mechanism to outline parameters for locating and purchasing properties in the city that may be used for recreation purposes.
 - a. Develop a process to identify lands that become available for purchase or lease.
 - b. Develop criteria to determine potential value for recreation use.
 - c. Provide direction on how those lands could be developed for recreation purposes.
- RE-F.17. Encourage private development to include recreation elements, such as children's play areas, rooftop parks and courts, usable public plazas, and mini-parks.
- RE-F.18. Include useable passive and/or active public recreation areas in private development projects which require community plan amendments resulting in population densities above those identified in the applicable land use plan.
- RE-F.19. Pursue joint use agreements for recreational facilities as a means of meeting Park and Recreation Guidelines.
- RE-F.20. Establish a policy for park design and development which encourages the use of sustainable methods and techniques to address water and energy conservation, green buildings, low maintenance plantings and local environmental conditions, such as soil and climate (See also Conservation Element, Section H. Sustainable Development and Urban Forestry).